Mikaela Gay

Fires in the Mirror Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.  
  
Crown Heights. This is a neighborhood in the central part of Brooklyn, New York. This the location for the riots caused by the deaths of Gavin Cato and Yankel Rosenbaum. This is also where all the people interviewed and depicted in this play reside.   
  
2. What is the *intrusion*?  
  
The little black boy, Gavin Cato, getting hit by the Jewish man while walking along the sidewalk. This is the triggering factor. It is after this murder, on the same day, that Yankel Rosenbaum is stabbed to death simply for being Jewish. These two death spark the riots. They break the nonviolence barrier of hate and underlining discrimination into full on rage and aggression towards the other race.   
  
3. What is the *unique factor*?  
  
The built-up tension between the two groups. Before these deaths there was an issue in Crown Heights between the Jews and blacks. It was something that was obvious to everyone, but not an issue that was considered something worth addressing. If there was never any tension amongst these two parities of people, the deaths could be seen as act committed by one individual and not a reason to mob against one another. There was always energy to start these riots, but they needed a smoking gun and the deaths provided that.   
  
4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

What will come of the tension between the two races?  
Two people are dead, one from each side, so what now?  
  
5. In your opinion, what is the most theatrical segment of the video version of the play and explain why do you think it is so powerful?  
  
The black boy who was killed, Gavin Cato’s father and the Jewish student, Yankel Rosenbaum’s brother were equally powerful to me. Their sadness and pain gave passion and power to each and every word that came from their mouth. They were heavily affected by the death of their loved one and it was evident. Anna Deavere Smith did a great job portraying these two men with so much hurt and aggression. I believe that she too understood the significance of all the characters in building the story, especially the family members. It seems that she ensured that the way their words were given to her were mimicked precisely and given back to the audience.   
  
6. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Death

Anger

Injustice

Passion

Violence

Fear

7. Television allows the actress to create mini sets, a variety of lighting effects, and detailed costume pieces for the presentation of her many characters, not to mention graphic footage of the actual events in Crown Heights. This is frankly not possible to accomplish on the stage which requires that the action move rapidly between one scene and the other leaving little if any time for a change of dress, settings, lights, and props. Describe some of the varieties of these production details that struck you as particularly effective.

The change in hairstyle and the way the clothing was used to alter the appearance of size of the actress. Sometimes accessories were essential, for example, the glasses for the author or hat and glasses for one of the rabbis, etc. The props helped to frame the setting and background to allow the character to appear in their element and more realistic to the audience. I do wish however, that the director had allowed for a little bit more mobility. Since Ann was giving a monologue with limited props for each scene, more motion would have given the audience a better connection to each character. The unknown man #1 who was on the street felt relatable and like a friend I was conversing with. This character moved the most out of everyone shown in the few clips, so this is why I would have encouraged more movement.